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ABSTRACT

The Minneapolis paraprofessional program was developed with funds from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965. Paraprofessionals are now an integral part of the Minneapolis Public Schools. They have contributed much to the education of students and staff and to good school-community relations. The New Careers and Career Opportunities Programs have provided many low-income paraprofessionals with additional educational opportunities. Every effort has been made to provide training for both specific job assignments and to meet the needs of individual paraprofessionals. Opportunities range from basic education to academic courses and are offered at community schools and college campuses. While it is important that a paraprofessional be well trained, it is equally important that the supervising teacher or other staff member be trained in the effective utilization of the paraprofessionals. Orientation is given to first year teachers and teachers who are new to a school that uses paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals do not make a teacher's job easier. The duties a paraprofessional assumes release the teacher to initiate activities at a higher and broader professional level. As a result, the teacher and paraprofessional team provide a better learning environment. The paraprofessional in education is a means through which schools and communities can work together. (RC)

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A Decade of Paraprofessional Programs in Minneapolis Public Schools

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A DECADE OF PARAPROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS IN MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Over the past 10 years, many changes and innovations have been made in the field of education that have had an effect on the operation of schools, but the greatest impact on the actual instructional process has been achieved through the introduction of paraprofessionals in the schools. The very presence of another adult changes the atmosphere of the classroom. More important, it gives teachers and other staff who work with paraprofessionals the means to develop a better delivery system of educational services to students. In school systems such as Minneapolis, where the emphasis has been on hiring community persons as paraprofessionals, with no requirement as to educational level, there is even broader impact on the classroom and school. In addition to providing educational services, these paraprofessionals are a liaison between the community and the school, provide a different cultural input, and serve as an alternative adult model for students. They provide a valuable link between parents and the school staff.

Development

As with many school systems throughout the nation, the Minneapolis paraprofessional program was developed with funds from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. However, two earlier experiences with paraprofessionals are of great importance in that they established the philosophy on which the program was developed. The first, in the summer of 1964, was initiated by the Youth Development Project using funds from the Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act, and involved hiring several community persons as paraprofessionals in one target area elementary school. The second experience, a 1965 Urban Area Summer School, was funded by the Economic Opportunity Act and involved 126 paraprofessionals. This program operated in 16 elementary schools which served low-income communities and contained the highest proportion of minority students. Each teacher was aided by a paraprofessional who lived in the community and qualified as a low-income family member. Teachers were involved in the selection of the paraprofessionals and efforts were made to employ parents of the students involved. Hiring low-income neighborhood persons with no educational requirements was a radical idea at that time and certainly a departure from the earlier experiments with paraprofessionals (which had rather high educational requirements, many times a liberal arts degree). Some paraprofessional programs still maintain similar educational requirements.

The Urban Summer School proved to be a real learning experience. Teachers who were asking, "What do I do with a paraprofessional?" when summer school began were soon asking, "What would I do without a paraprofessional?" The overwhelming acceptance of paraprofessionals by teachers set the stage for instituting a regular school-year paraprofessional program when funds under

Title I became available that fall. Two hundred paraprofessionals were hired, many of whom had worked in the summer school program. Although there was no requirement to hire low-income neighborhood persons, this policy was continued, as was the involvement of teachers in the selection of paraprofessionals. They were selected on the basis of their personal qualities after residency and need were established. In November 1965, the use of paraprofessionals was extended when home visitors, now referred to as social work aides, were employed. They were introduced under the Higher Incentive Project, also funded by Title I, and were conceived to be an adjunct to the existing School Social Work Program. Much of their growth and development paralleled that of teacher aides. Since then, the increased demand for paraprofessional services plus the inclusion of paraprofessionals in the staffing of new programs has increased the number of paraprofessionals working in the Minneapolis Public Schools to over 1,400.

The development of the Minneapolis paraprofessional program was considerably enhanced by the New Careers Program (1967) and the Career Opportunities Program (1970). These programs made it possible to bring in additional personnel, to provide additional training opportunities and were instrumental in establishing a Career Lattice. This lattice was adopted by the Board of Education to cover all paraprofessional personnel.

The Career Lattice is an integral part of the entire Auxiliary Personnel Program regardless of the funding souces. It serves as the basic structure for employment and advancement. The Career Lattice includes four broad categories of paraprofessionals: Teacher Aide, Social Work Aide, Media Aide, and Counselor Aide. Each category has three classifications (School Aide I, School Aide II, and School Assistant) with six salary steps in each classification. Movement from one category to another (Teacher Aide, Social Work Aide, Media Aide, and Counselor Aide) is possible at the School Aide I and II levels. Progression on the salary steps is dependent upon successful experience and participation in training.

When the paraprofessional program was brought under City Civil Service, the Career Lattice was adopted as the model in developing the classffication structure. The present Career Lattice, with its hierarchically defined tasks, selection criteria, traits and characteristics, training and transfer opportunities, fringe benefits and salary schedule, is the current career structure of the Auxiliary Personnel Program of the Minneapolis Public Schools. It is expected that future revisions of this lattice will be necessary to reflect ongoing program developments.

Although the Career Lattice delineates job descriptions at all three classification levels in terms of general functions, illustrative functions, and responsibilities, they are suggestive rather than regulatory. The important factor is that each paraprofessional is assigned directly to a teacher,

social worker, counselor, librarian, etc., and that certified person has the professional freedom and the responsibility to utilize the services of that paraprofessional to provide the best possible education for students. It is expected that, as paraprofessionals become more proficient through experience and training, they will be involved more deeply in the instructional process and be given increased responsibilities.

When paraprofessionals were first introduced into the schools in 1965, the program objectives were to allow the teacher to spend a maximum amount of time teaching children by relieving the teacher of routine clerical and housekeeping tasks, to provide a liaison for the community through a neighborhood resident working in the classroom as a paraprofessional, and to have another adult in the classroom with whom children could develop a positive relationship. With these objectives in mind, teachers went about learning how to work with paraprofessionals. A weekly, 3-hour inservice training session for paraprofessionals was written into the program and a full-time consultant was hired to coordinate the training and to give the program direction. During this crucial development period, teachers were encouraged to be creative, to experiment, and to share their experiences. There was very little formal policy. The philosophy was to let the program grow and shape itself and to add structure when structure was needed. Workshops for teachers were conducted using as resource persons the teacher/paraprofessional teams who had most successfully worked out a meaningful role for the paraprofessional and principals who were most supportive of this role. By the end of the first year, great progress had been made in the successful utilization of paraprofessionals, but teachers were concerned about the legality of this new role. At the suggestion of teachers, a summer workshop was held to explore the legal and functional factors in the relationships between teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators. Attorneys for the Board of Education worked with the group and a policy statement was adopted as Minneapolic Public Schools' policy in February of 1967. It states:

> The professional teacher is trained and certified to perform certain functions in the education of children. The responsibilities that are reserved for teachers involve: (1) analyzing the instructional needs of pupils; (2) prescribing educational activities to meet the pupils' needs; and, (3) certain supervisory responsibilities consistent with established school policy and directed by the school principal.
>
> Teachers working with nonprofessional helpers, either in or out of the classroom, must rely upon their own professional judgment when assigning duties to nonprofessional helpers.

These duties should not infringe upon the responsibilities reserved for teachers, but nonprofessionals may assist teachers in meeting their responsibilities.

The school principal retains the traditional responsibility for supervision of the school and the entire staff.

In effect, the policy states that teachers can give paraprofessionals any assignment that they, in their professional judgment, deem appropriate for that paraprofessional.

The policy did much to eliminate the concern teachers had that they might "go too far" in the assignments they gave paraprofessionals. It gave them the freedom and encouragement to continue developing a meaningful role for paraprofessionals in education. A concern did remain on the part of teachers that school administrators might assign paraprofessionals to replace teachers for fiscal expediency or in crisis situations. With this in mind, the superintendent asked that the policy be clarified by drafting specific rules to govern administrative action. These rules were adopted in October 1967 stating:

1. In the absence of the teacher, for any reason, the nonprofessional may not assume or be assigned the responsibilities reserved for teachers.

2. Nonprofessionals may not be given independent responsibility for classroom management and organization.

3. The nonprofessional may not function in a normal classroom helping role if a certified teacher is not available for direction and guidance.

The rules allowed teachers the flexibility to leave a paraprofessional in charge during a teacher's limited absence, but specifically prohibited their use as substitute teachers or strike breakers. This proved to be most significant, because in the spring of 1970, the Minneapolis teachers went on strike. The ruling was adhered to, and what could have been the source of distrust and alienation between teachers and paraprofessionals actually strengthened this relationship. Many paraprofessionals reported for work during the strike at the direction of their teachers, who knew they would not be used as strike breakers and that they could ill afford to lose salary. When the strike was over, the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers gave paraprofessionals a vote of confidence by paying the salary lost by any paraprofessional who chose not to enter the buildings.

Two additional policies have been adopted by the Minneapolis Board of Education relative to paraprofessionals. One was adopted in March 1968 and dealt with utilization of paraprofessionals throughout the school system, rather than solely in target area schools. The other, adopted in July 1971, stated that "the Minneapolis Public Schools shall continue to employ qualified paraprofessional personnel to work under the supervision of certified professionals" and that "teachers shall have the option to be represented in the selection process for paraprofessionals." It also stated that teachers shall be consulted before paraprofessionals are assigned to them and that they shall have the opportunity to be involved in their evaluation.

From the beginning of the program, close contact was maintained with the two major teacher organizations, the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and the Minneapolis Education Association, so that both were well informed and knew that teachers were involved in the development of the paraprofessional program. Unfortunately, another segment of the school staff was not involved or informed, and this proved to be the source of considerable difficulty when the program was brought into the Civil Service System. The Clerical Union opposed the hiring of paraprofessionals without citywide written Civil Service testing and only after considerable effort on the part of both school and Civil Service staff was the selection process by oral testing in neighborhood schools preserved.

Although the number of paraprofessionals in the Minneapolis schools has continued to increase and the utilization of aides has been expanded to all areas of the school program, the basic philosophy of hiring neighborhood persons has been maintained. Applications and medical examinations are facilitated by the Civil Service Office, but the testing and hiring is done in the individual schools by the principal and/or staff. Testing consists of a basic literacy test and an oral examination dealing with a person's desire and ability to work with children and a knowledge of the community. The usual six-month Civil Service probationary period applies to all newly appointed paraprofessionals. During that time, orientation and assistance is provided by an experienced aide who serves as the building Aide Coordinator. Also, the teacher with whom the new paraprofessional works provides training and assistance in the job assignment and does periodic evaluation. Upon successful completion of the probationary period, the paraprofessional achieves tenure.

Permanently certified paraprofessionals receive fringe benefits of vacation pay; sick leave; holiday pay; leave of absence for death in the immediate family, religious holidays, and jury duty; workmen's compensation; shared cost retirement; optional shared cost family hospitalization; general liability; free legal assistance in the event of work-related civil actions and the option of leave of absence without pay. Part-time paraprofessionals, those who work less than 20 hours a week, receive these benefits with the exception of sick leave, vacation pay, and shared cost retirement and hospitalization.

Salary increases have been granted by the Board of Education on the same basis as other Civil Service employees despite the lack of formal organization. Two attempts have been made to establish a bargaining unit for paraprofessionals, but neither was successful. In 1971, the Minneapolis Association of Paraprofessionals, an affiliate of the Minnesota Education Association, petitioned the Director of the Bureau of Mediation Services for recognition as bargaining agent. An election was held late in 1971 but the resolution failed to pass. The Minneapolis Federation of Teachers filed a similar petition, but an election early in 1972 also failed to establish a bargaining agent. Recent state legislation has revised the requirements for establishing a bargaining unit and it is possible that another attempt will be made.

Training for Paraprofessionals

Training has been an integral part of the Minneapolis Paraprofessional Program from the beginning. Inherent in the philosophy on which the program was founded is the belief that neighborhood persons have life experiences and cultural understanding that are invaluable to professional faculty and students. Educational background is less important because skills which are needed for any particular paraprofessional assignment can be acquired through training. Furthermore, training taken while actively working with students is more productive and meaningful.

Through the Minneapolis Public Schools' participation in a New Careers Program and the adoption of a New Careers philosophy, training became part of an upgrading and advancement plan that eventually became an officially adopted Career Lattice for all paraprofessional personnel. The training program has developed so that it now offers a wide variety of training opportunities and involves many different training resources. Every effort is made to provide training for both specific job assignments and to meet the needs of individual paraprofessionals. Opportunities range from basic education to academic courses and are offered at community schools and college campuses. Any course that will help a paraprofessional work more effectively with teachers and students is considered legitimate training and carries credit for advancement on the Career Lattice. There is no hierarchy of credit; an inservice course has as much credit value as a college course. The only criterion is that courses must be relevant to the assignment of the paraprofessional.

Courses designed to increase skills for working in the areas for reading and math as well as in the general areas of child psychology and development have high priority. Courses developed at the request of teachers and paraprofessionals usually deal with the acquisition of skills needed for a

particular function. These include such courses as: Audiovisual Training, Games for Elementary School Children, 7th Grade Mathematics, Sign Language for the Deaf, First Aid, and Calligraphy. Instructors are recruited from among teachers, principals, supervisors, and experienced paraprofessionals from the Minneapolis schools and from any other available source of talent. The Red Cross provides instructors for First Aid; the director of a child guidance clinic teaches courses in basic Child Psychology and Behavior; a paraprofessional teaches beginning and advanced courses in Audiovisual Techniques; a former New Careerist and COP graduate teaches courses in Chemical Awareness. As paraprofessionals become involved in new roles through the initiation of new programs or because teachers involve them in new activities, training courses are developed to teach whatever skills are needed.

Paraprofessionals are encouraged to participate in training for their own personal development as well as to help them in their work with students. Linkage has been established with many different training sources in order to provide the widest variety of courses possible. Basic education courses are available throughout the city for those who want to brush up on the basic skills and for those who may not have completed high school and want to earn a GED. Courses in Efficient Reading, Effective Writing, and Word Power may be taken through the educational television network. Any of the Community School courses which have relevance to working with students or to a specific assignment are approved as appropriate paraprofessional training. Occasionally, community groups and organizations sponsor workshops which can serve as excellent training opportunities for paraprofessionals. Many professional growth courses which are developed for Minneapolis teachers are available to paraprofessionals as well and often provide an opportunity for the teacher and paraprofessional to participate in training together.

On the College Campus

College coursework is available through Metropolitan Community College and the University of Minnesota. In addition, Career Opportunities Program participants may enroll at Augsburg College, the College of St. Catherine, and Minnesota Metropolitan State College. Many courses are sponsored by Model Cities and Pilot Cities and are offered in the community. A close working relationship has been developed with the Community College. Its regular course offerings are available to paraprofessionals and, at the request of the public schools, special courses are developed. Also, the public schools' paraprofessional training staff has developed courses which

have become a part of the college curriculum, and they serve as part-time Community College staff to teach these courses. They include: The Role and Function of the School Paraprofessional, The Community and Its School, Values Clarification, The Role and Function of the Community Helping Person, and Problem Solving and Teaming for School Personnel. The training staff also supervises and verifies the Work Experience Credit for Career Opportunities Program participants.

Courses at the University of Minnesota have been available for paraprofessionals since very early in the program. Throughout the New Careers Program, and later the Career Opportunities Program, the University served as an educational training resource. Recently, the Minneapolis paraprofessional training staff was moved both physically and administratively to the Minneapolis Public Schools/University of Minnesota Teacher Center on the Main University Campus. This move enhances both teacher and paraprofessional training.

A "Paraprofessional Training Bulletin," which lists available courses, is distributed to all paraprofessionals prior to the beginning of each quarter. The paraprofessional training staff expedites registration and sends confirmations for courses requested. Courses are tuition-free for all paraprofessionals.

New Roles for Teachers

While it is important that a paraprofessional be well trained, it is equally important that the supervising teacher or other staff member be trained in the effective utilization of the paraprofessional. The most important single factor in the success of a teacher/paraprofessional team is the skill of the supervising teacher in assigning and supervising the activities of the paraprofessional. Working with a paraprofessional places teachers in a new role, one for which there usually has been no formal training. Instead of the traditional training and role of being exclusively responsible for the educational activities of a classroom of students, the teacher is expected to function in a new role as a supervisor, trainer, and evaluator of another adult as well. It is an expanded role which requires additional skills. A teacher has the opportunity to spend more time with students, try different teaching techniques, and provide more individualized instruction. Because more individual attention is provided, discipline problems diminish. The classroom becomes a more interesting and exciting place for both the students and the teacher.

In spring 1974, the State of Minnesota Department of Education, in cooperation with the Duluth and Minneapolis Career Opportunities Programs, conducted a descriptive study of the effective utilization of COP-trained

paraprofessionals.[1] When asked how the teacher's role has changed as a result of having a COP paraprofessional in the classroom, teachers and principals unanimously agreed that the paraprofessional enables the teacher to individualize instruction to a greater extent and to provide more individual attention to more children. A majority of teachers also said that the aide enabled them to conduct more small-group instruction. It is clear that these teachers perceive themselves as functioning differently when assisted by paraprofessionals and they indicated that their roles have been expanded to include supervisory responsibility for another adult.

The key to the successful utilization of a paraprofessional is that the teacher actually accepts and implements the role change. If teachers continue to teach and manage classrooms in the same manner as they did before they gained the services of a paraprofessional, the overall educational impact is minimal. In fact, if a paraprofessional is used in a strictly clerical role, there is danger that the teacher will become a "paper teacher" and ultimately have even less student contact than before. It is, therefore, essential that teachers and other supervisors of paraprofessionals be properly oriented to their new role; that they have the opportunity for training to become effective supervisors, efficient trainers, and objective evaluators; that they receive the necessary guidance to develop the kind of teacher/paraprofessional team relationship that will deliver optimum educational services to students.

Teacher Orientation

First-year teachers or teachers who are new to a school that uses paraprofessionals receive an orientation before school begins to acquaint them with the philosophy of using neighborhood residents as paraprofessionals, the school policies on the utilization of paraprofessionals, and the responsibilities of supervising a paraprofessional. Teachers who will be working with Title I or any other categorical program which funds paraprofessionals should also be oriented to state and federal guidelines so that they understand the goals and objectives of the program and the ways in which these paraprofessionals can be assigned to achieve these goals. Teachers who are skilled in the utilization of paraprofessionals can serve as a valuable resource to new teachers.

A paraprofessional can be a threat to a first-year teacher, and an experienced paraprofessional can be a threat to any teacher new to the building. Fortunately, most teachers coming into a new school look at working with an experienced paraprofessional as an asset rather than a threat; as a ready resource for information about the community, the students, and about building procedures. New teacher/paraprofessional teams should jointly share information about previous work with other teachers or aides and outline which things worked better than others.

[1] Minnesota Department of Education, "The Effectiveness of Paraprofessionals Trained under the Career Opportunities Program," 1974.

The orientation workshop for teachers should focus on the new role as a supervisor, trainer, and evaluator of a paraprofessional. The parameters of this new role must be discussed and the burden of responsibility emphasized. The teacher/supervisor should discuss the educational goals for the class with the paraprofessional, use professional judgment in assigning duties which are compatible with the present skill and experience level of the paraprofessional, and give clear and specific instructions.

In Minneapolis, teacher orientations are usually begun by showing a narrated slide/tape presentation explaining the Minneapolis Paraprofessional Program entitled "The School Aide Story." It gives teachers background on the development of the paraprofessional program, funding sources, and a general overview of the many different assignments of paraprofessionals in the schools. A "Supervisor's Manual" containing basic information on the supervision of paraprofessionals serves as a guide as well as a ready reference. Copies of the Career Lattice are given to each teacher as well as paraprofessional. This manual is especially helpful because it includes job descriptions in terms of general and illustrative functions, responsibilities, selection criteria, training opportunities, and transfer possibilities for the three paraprofessional classifications. It also has information on the salary schedule and fringe benefits. Another booklet, "Let's Talk About... Manual for Aides" is also distributed and discussed. This booklet explains the personnel function of the program in detail. Included are hiring procedures, policies, rules and guidelines, and an outline for orienting a paraprofessional to a school. It is the supervisor's responsibility to interpret these policies, rules, guidelines, and procedures, and to help the paraprofessional get acquainted with the building and fellow employees. Although teachers are the direct supervisors of paraprofessionals, they must understand that they have access to the principal and to the paraprofessional training staff for assistance in any problem that might arise.

Another valuable aid for teachers who are to work with paraprofessionals is the narrated slide/tape presentation, "So You Are an Aide." This presentation was developed to help both paraprofessionals and teachers understand some of the basic elements of being a successful paraprofessional. This presentation is especially helpful in workshops where both teachers and paraprofessionals participate. Teachers are also given a handout entitled "What Supervisors Expect from Paraprofessionals and What Paraprofessionals Expect from Their Supervisors" and bookmarks which have the goals of the Minneapolis Paraprofessional Program on one side and the general responsibilities of a paraprofessional on the other.

More recent materials which have been developed by the paraprofessional training staff are a "Self Evaluation for Supervisors" and a narrated slide/tape

presentation, "Team Effectiveness." The former is a series of questions for supervisors under the main headings of "Getting Started," "Functioning as an Effective Team," and "Feedback and Evaluation." "Team Effectiveness" focuses on team concept, elements of an effective team, and variables that affect teams. It also has follow-up activities and suggestions for implementation.

Teachers as Trainers and Supervisors

The teacher must be a trainer, especially if the paraprofessional has never worked in a classroom. In fact, the training given by the teacher is probably the most important training the paraprofessional will ever receive. Such training is recognized by the fact that no additional outside training is required for advancement on the first three steps of the Career Lattice. The teacher must orient the paraprofessional to classroom procedures and how to use the instructional materials. Demonstrating exactly how the materials are used may be necessary. The teacher must realize that training is an ongoing process and that, as the paraprofessional gains in skills and experience, the duties and involvement of that paraprofessional must grow accordingly. As they work together and the teacher becomes more skillful in directing the paraprofessional in learning activities, additional training will often enhance the team's effectiveness. Teachers should encourage the paraprofessional to participate in training opportunities which would increase effectiveness in the classroom.

Through regular school visits, members of the paraprofessional training staff seek suggestions for inservice courses and pass on ideas that are helpful in developing effective teacher/paraprofessional teams. As teachers become skilled supervisors of paraprofessionals, they should be encouraged to serve as resource persons for teacher/paraprofessional workshops and paraprofessional inservice courses.

Teachers as Evaluators

The role of an evaluator is sometimes difficult for a teacher. Giving positive feedback or complimenting a paraprofessional for a job well done is not difficult, but dealing with unsatisfactory performance requires the courage to face a problem and deal with it objectively. The teacher should meet privately with the paraprofessional, discuss problems openly and objectively and suggest ways for improvement. She/he should listen carefully to anything the paraprofessional has to say about the problem and make sure that he/she understands exactly what is expected. Although the emphasis should be on the positive in evaluation, both positive and negative feedback are necessary if a paraprofessional is to develop as an effective team member. When a teacher fails to deal with a problem, the team

relationship deteriorates to the point where the teacher and paraprofessional can no longer work together. If the teacher has discussed the problem with the paraprofessional and no improvement is noted, the principal and the paraprofessional training staff should be contacted for assistance. If the problem persists, the paraprofessional may be more successful with another teacher or in some cases must be discharged.

Some form of evaluation should be continued throughout a team's working relationship, but evaluation, both formal and informal, is most important during the first few months a teacher and paraprofessional work together. It is during this time that relationships which are crucial to the development of the team are established. Frequent and thorough evaluation is also important to help the paraprofessional successfully complete the six-month probationary period and to give the teacher an adequate background for making the probationary report. Teachers should give their paraprofessional partners a copy of "Self Evaluation for Paraprofessionals" to serve as a guide and periodically discuss some of the points which are appropriate at that time.

Materials are also available to help teachers with evaluation. A "One and One-Half Month Discussion" form serves as a general guide for evaluating a paraprofessional early in the relationship. It is a one-sheet outline which deals with personal characteristics in relation to the job, an assessment of performance and questions to be discussed with the paraprofessional. It is meant to be informal in that it is not a written report, yet it provides a framework in which the teacher and paraprofessional can talk over how their working relationship is developing, examine the areas in which the paraprofessional needs improvement and formulate plans to bring about improvement.

All new paraprofessionals in the Minneapolis schools must have an evaluation when they have completed three months of employment. A detailed "Three Month Evaluation" form is used for this purpose. The evaluation covers job performance, relationships with students, supervisors, and with parents, community and other aides; there is also a place for comments by the paraprofessional. The teacher completes the evaluation, discusses it with the paraprofessional, they both sign it and it is sent to the Office of Auxiliary Personnel. If the evaluation is not satisfactory, a member of the paraprofessional training staff will work with the team to alleviate problems and to set definite plans for improvement.

When a paraprofessional nears completion of the six-month probationary period, the supervisor completes a short Civil Service evaluation which determines continued employment. If the paraprofessional is performing satisfactorily, tenure is granted; if not, employment is terminated. It is obvious that for

both team development and accurate determination of employment, good consistent evaluation and feedback are essential during the first six months a teacher and paraprofessional work together. However, if a teacher and paraprofessional are to continue to grow in their working relationship, some form of regular evaluation is necessary. Teachers should provide verbal feedback whenever appropriate, set aside time on a regular basis to talk over how things are going and to suggest improvements, and, if possible, do an annual formal evaluation. The paraprofessional training staff is experimenting with two different forms to help teachers do annual evaluations. One is quite similar to the "Three Month Evaluation," while the other is much more subjective. Whichever one teachers find most helpful will be developed.

Members of the paraprofessional training staff serve as resource persons to help teachers and paraprofessionals improve team performance. Upon request, they will conduct workshops for teachers and paraprofessionals separately or as a combined group. Workshops of this kind can be most effective when both teachers and paraprofessionals are included. Training staff members spend much of their time in schools talking with principals, teachers, and other professional staff and with paraprofessionals about both successful and problem areas and ways in which the utilization of paraprofessionals can be improved or replicated. They investigate current needs for training and solicit ideas for new courses. Regular contact with school staff is essential not only to provide service to teams, but to maintain the professional effectiveness of the training staff; that is, to keep up to date through direct contact with practitioners, to keep a realistic attitude by dealing with ongoing team development, and to maintain the background necessary to keep the training program responsive to current needs.

Although reference is made primarily to teachers as supervisors of paraprofessionals, the same basic principles apply to others who work with paraprofessionals. School social workers, counselors, and librarians who work with paraprofessionals also find that their roles have been expanded; that they now have the opportunity to perform at a higher level of professional competence. They, too, are now supervisors, trainers, and evaluators of other adults. Developing a good team relationship is equally important for them. Most of the materials, especially the Career Lattice and "Let's Talk About... Manual for Aides," were developed for use by all supervisors of paraprofessionals.

Impact of Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals are an integral part of the Minneapolis Public Schools. They have contributed much to the education of students and staff and to good school-community relations. Working as paraprofessionals has also been a valuable experience for them as well. It has provided meaningful employment with an opportunity for training and advancement. Working with teachers and other school staff in helping students has contributed to their own personal growth. Success as a paraprofessional and additional education through the training program have helped many develop greater self esteem. In many cases, participation in training has had a positive effect on the educational attitudes and aspiration level of the paraprofessional's children. Working as a paraprofessional has also been an avenue to other employment. The same work experience and training that advances them on the Career Lattice makes them desirable employees in other areas of employment as well.

The New Careers and Career Opportunities Programs have provided many low-income paraprofessionals additional educational opportunities. Many have advanced to the upper levels of the Career Lattice and over 50 have earned college degrees. Many of these graduates are now teachers or social workers in the Minneapolis Public Schools. Some have taken positions in other school systems or social agencies.

As with other school districts' developed paraprofessional programs, it became apparent that all paraprofessionals had much to gain in meeting to share ideas and participate in workshops together. With this in mind, the Minneapolis paraprofessional training staff, with the cooperation of staff and paraprofessionals in St. Paul, Duluth, and other school systems, set about organizing a statewide conference. With assistance from the Minnesota State Department of Education and financial support and publicity from both the Minnesota Education Association and the Minnesota Federation of Teachers, the first Minnesota Statewide Conference for Teacher Aides was held in Minneapolis in fall 1972. This conference, as well as those in 1973 and 1974, featured a variety of workshops of interest to paraprofessionals and provided an opportunity for them to meet and share ideas. The 1974 conference was of particular significance in that it was planned and conducted by paraprofessionals. They have assumed continued leadership for conducting the conference annually.

That paraprofessionals have an important impact on the instructional process, the role of the teacher, and on school-community relations is well documented. So also is the fact that they have considerable student contact and that schools are a better place for children because of paraprofessionals. However, very little has been done to substantiate their impact on actual student learning. Citywide testing shows that reading achievement in the Minneapolis schools has increased in consecutive years, and paraprofessionals are deeply involved in the reading programs, but how much and in what ways they have contributed to this improvement is not known. The research study, "The Role of the Elementary Classroom Teacher Aide in the Minneapolis Public Schools," notes an emphasis on paraprofessional involvement with the cognitive and emotional development of children, but does not deal with the results of this involvement. Another study, "A Description and Task Analysis of the Minneapolis Public Schools' Social Work Aide Program and Position," provides a detailed report on how much time a paraprofessional in the area of social work spends in contact with students, parents, staff, and agencies, as well as routine activities. Again, it does not attempt to assess the effect of their efforts on student success. The Minnesota Department of Education's "Study of the Utilization of Paraprofessionals Trained under the Career Opportunities Program" included a section dealing specifically with impact on pupils. It found that although most teachers, social workers, and principals talked about the increased individual attention provided by the paraprofessionals, less than half stated that children learn more because of their services. A majority did agree that the paraprofessionals have a positive effect upon students' attitudes toward school and that students' self-concepts are improved due to the increased individual attention and help provided by COP paraprofessionals. The only research which measured actual impact of paraprofessionals in the Minneapolis Public Schools was conducted in the spring of 1967. This research, "An Experiment to Discover Whether Teacher Aides Can Be Used Effectively to Help Develop Reading Readiness in Kindergarten Children," showed that students in kindergarten classrooms that used paraprofessionals gained significantly more in reading readiness than those in classrooms without paraprofessionals. Research such as this which shows that paraprofessionals do have a measurable positive effect on student performance is helpful in developing greater utilization of paraprofessionals in schools, but perhaps the most important influence is the continual clamor on the part of school staffs for paraprofessional help.

The growth of the Minneapolis Paraprofessional Program is due, to a large extent, to a commitment to the utilization of paraprofessionals by the school administration. Although an increase in federal and state funds

has contributed to this growth, a substantial portion of the program is supported by local tax funds. Along with this numerical growth has come an expanding utilization of paraprofessionals. The Basic Skills Centers for the improvement of reading skills of low achievers have considerable paraprofessional services; the Student Aide Program uses secondary students as paraprofessionals to tutor elementary children and the program is supervised by a former New Careerist paraprofessional in one area and by a Career Opportunities Program participant in another. Paraprofessionals in the area of social work are an integral part of the Student Support Program. These paraprofessionals are assigned a group of students and, under the supervision of a school social worker, make home visitations, serve as an advocate for the students, and provide group counseling in an effort to prevent student dropout. The Minneapolis Indian Education Project has a staff of Indian School-Community Social Work paraprofessionals who assist the schools in meeting the needs of Indian students, work on attendance problems, and help Indian families in their relationship with schools and social agencies.

The Minneapolis Public Schools are now involved in a major decentralized reorganization and a program of desegregation-integration. Schools have been paired; others have been reorganized into clusters or complexes. Alternative education models are available to students from anywhere within the decentralized Educational Areas. Many programs involve busing. Paraprofessionals are a part of it all. They have moved along with the students. Where educational alternatives for children are involved, paraprofessionals are also given their choice of alternative. Neighborhood persons, as "Desegregation Counselor Aides," ride the buses with the students to and from their school setting. They serve in a parental role; provide a familiar face; bring community input along with the students. They work with school staff, parents, and the students to help make the adjustment to the desegregation-integration plan as easy as possible. The smoothness with which the plan was implemented is a tribute to both the professional and paraprofessional staff.

The uninitiated may think that paraprofessionals make a teacher's job easier. They do not; they should not. The duties a paraprofessional assumes release the teacher to initiate activities at a higher and broader professional level. As a result, the teacher and paraprofessional team provide a better learning environment. The paraprofessional in education is a means through which schools and communities can work together to provide a better delivery system of educational services to their students.